



King County Councilmember

Bob Ferguson

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District 2

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King County

Dear Neighbors:

Election reform is one of my legislative priorities for 2005 and the focus of this newsletter. Real election reform must be realized, not just discussed and debated.

I am advocating a bipartisan election reform package with two of my Council colleagues that can be implemented at the County level. Those proposed reforms are detailed in this newsletter.

In addition, I recently met with Secretary of State Sam Reed and State Senator Jim Kastama to discuss election reforms that must occur at the State level. Counties are creatures of the State and State law largely dictates county election procedures.

I hope you will take the time to complete the enclosed survey to help guide public policy regarding our election system.

It is an honor to serve you on the King County Council. Please contact me with any questions you might have about this or other issues.

Sincerely,

Bob Ferguson

ELECTION FACTS AND REFORMS

How many King County residents are registered voters?

There are 1,082,406 registered voters in King County. In the 2004 general election, over 898,000 voters participated with a turnout of 83 percent.

How many elections does King County conduct each year?

In addition to the primary and general elections, King County operates several special elections during the winter and spring for school, hospital, sewer, and fire districts. In 2004, King County conducted six separate elections operating both poll and vote by mail systems.

What voting system does King County use?

King County operates two separate voting systems—by mail and at the polls. Over 60 percent of voters are designated as permanent absentee voters and only participate by mail. In addition, King County operates 540 polling locations, which entails renting facilities, hiring poll workers, and maintaining poll ballot tabulation equipment.

Who runs elections in King County?

The Director of King County Elections is appointed by the King County Executive and confirmed by the Council to oversee the election process. Dean Logan currently serves as King County Elections

Director. This is not an elected position. There is currently a proposal before the Council to create an elected auditor position to oversee the election process, similar to the elected King County Sheriff and Assessor. King County is the only county in the state without an elected auditor to oversee elections. Critics argue that an appointed elections director ensures the most qualified person fills that position.



I recently met with Secretary of State Sam Reed to discuss State election reforms. Secretary Reed introduced several State election reforms including an earlier primary, ballots returned by election day, uniform ballot processing procedures for all counties, and the flexibility for counties to host all vote by mail elections.

When are absentee ballots due?

Absentee ballots legally must be postmarked by election day. The Secretary of State and many county elections departments support changing the postmark date for absentee ballots to the Friday before the election to ensure ballots are received by election day. Absentee ballots could still be dropped off at polling locations and ballot drop off boxes on election day. This would

allow counties to produce quicker election results.

When is the primary election held?

Washington State's primary election is held the second Tuesday in September. County elections departments and the Secretary of State assert there is insufficient time between the primary and general elections to properly conduct elections and support moving the primary up to an earlier

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ELECTION FACTS AND REFORMS

date. Two proposals are under consideration in Olympia—moving the primary to June or to August.

What are provisional ballots?

For voters who are not on the list of registered voters at a polling location, King County is required by federal law to offer a provisional ballot. This ballot reflects the jurisdictions of that polling location and once filled out, is secured into two envelopes and placed aside from normal poll ballots. Once King County receives the provisional ballots, they verify that the voter is registered before counting the ballot. In the 2004 general election, 348 provisional ballots were improperly fed into poll site vote tabulation machines. King County subsequently identified 341 of the 348 ballots and determined that 252 were registered voters.

For more information

on election reform visit my website at www.metrokc.gov/ferguson



I recently hosted a town meeting on King County Elections with Dean Logan, Director of Elections. Nearly 200 North Seattle residents attended with ideas for election reform and ways to improve the integrity of King County's election process.

BIPARTISAN ELECTION REFORM PACKAGE

I am working on a bipartisan election reform package with Councilmembers Julia Patterson (D) and Kathy Lambert (R). These improvements can all be adopted by the County and do not require State authorization.

- Require provisional ballots to be formatted or coded to prevent machine tabulation at the poll site. This includes creating oversized provisional ballots or coding them to ensure rejection by poll site tabulation machines. For the February 2005 special election, King County successfully used coded labels to prevent provisional ballots from being read by poll site vote tabulation machines.
- Require the Executive to centralize election facilities instead of the multiple facilities currently operated.
- Increase funding for poll and election worker training to ensure election procedures are properly followed.
- Direct King County Elections to conduct a pilot special election entirely by mail to examine voter turnout, cost savings, and efficiencies. In the 2003 general election, over 70 percent of voters in King County participated by mail. In special elections, that number increases to over 80 percent. Oregon and several Washington State counties recently moved to an exclusive vote by mail system that increased voter turnout and saved tax payer dollars.

CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS

For more information on state election reforms, contact Your Legislators

Washington State law largely dictates how counties administer elections. Contact the Legislative Hotline at 1-800-562-6000 to leave a message for your legislators. The operator can assist you with determining your legislative district.

☐

Bob Ferguson

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SURVEY RESULTS

ELECTION REFORM SURVEY

Please help guide public policy regarding our election system. For more information about these reforms, please review this newsletter. Please check the box that best reflects your opinion.

Elected County Auditor

The King County Elections Director is appointed by the King County Executive and confirmed by the Council to oversee the election process. This is not an elected position. There is currently a proposal before the Council to create an elected auditor position to oversee the election process.

- ☐ I support the County Executive and Council appointing a qualified professional to oversee elections.
- ☐ I support an elected Auditor to run the elections department who would be directly accountable to the voters.

Survey Online

This survey is available online at www.metrokc.gov/ferguson. To mail, simply detach the survey, fold with mailing panel visible, and please affix a postage stamp.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Vote by Mail

In the 2003 general election, over 70 percent of voters in King County participated by mail. Oregon and several Washington State counties recently moved to an exclusive vote by mail system that increased voter turnout and saved tax payer dollars. County elections departments and the Secretary of State support a proposal to give flexibility to counties to perform any election entirely by mail.

- ☐ I support continuing both poll and vote by mail systems.
- ☐ I support adopting an exclusive vote by mail system.
- ☐ I support a pilot special vote by mail election.

Earlier Primary

Washington State's primary election is held the second Tuesday in September. County elections departments and the Secretary of State assert there is insufficient time between the primary and general elections to properly conduct elections and support moving the primary up to an earlier date.

- ☐ I support moving the primary to June.
- ☐ I support moving the primary to August.
- ☐ I do not support moving the primary election.

Ballots returned by Election Day

Absentee ballots legally must be postmarked by election day. The Secretary of State and many county elections departments support changing the postmark date for absentee ballots to the Friday before the election to ensure ballots are received by election day to produce quicker election results.

- ☐ I support changing the postmark deadline for absentee ballots to the Friday before election day.
- ☐ I do not support changing the postmark deadline for absentee ballots.

Questions / Comments: _____

Name: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____



Bob Ferguson

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JOIN

Town Meeting

with Seattle City Councilmember
Peter Steinbrueck

Tuesday, March 15, 2005
7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Olympic View Elementary School
504 Northeast 95th Street

I hope you can join us!

IN THE COMMUNITY

University Playground Park Landmark Fence Project Underway



I toured University Playground park with Daniel Winterbottom and Nancy Bocek, University Playground Park Chair and Roosevelt Neighbors Alliance Vice-Chair.

I recently toured the Landmark Fence project at University Playground Park (N.E. 50th & 8th Avenue N.E. in the University District). I secured funding in the 2005 King County Budget to help revitalize the 93 year-old historic University Playground Park. Sponsored by the Roosevelt Neighbors Alliance, the Landmark Fence project has already begun to take shape, creating an artistic community center and inviting green open space for the neighborhood. Through river rock pillars and artwork, the first phase of the fence is almost finished. To learn more, please contact Nancy Bocek at (206) 632-7760 or visit www.scn.org/neighbors/rna. Stones inscribed with your message or drawing can now be purchased to support phase two of the Landmark Fence project.